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SUBJECT: UNHCR AND NGOS OUTLINE ADMISSIONS AND ASSISTANCE PLANS AND CHALLENGES TO FOLEY DELEGATION

REF: A. AMMAN 4376

1B. AMMAN 3907

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: During a two-day visit to Amman, Senior Coordinator for Iraqi Refugee Issues Ambassador James Foley, accompanied by DHS Senior Advisor for Iraqi Refugees Lori Scialabba, discussed admission and assistance priorities with senior United Nations refugee officials, NGOs, and Jordanian General Intelligence Director Mohamed Dahabi (ref A). UNHCR emphasized that it can continue to produce referrals to the U.S. provided we can process them, and articulated its needs to assist vulnerable Iraqis with food, relief items and cash assistance in 2008. NGOs briefed on their operations and raised their concerns particularly over the future sustainability of Iraqi refugees in Jordan. END SUMMARY.

UNHCR RAISES NUMBERS AND SUPPORT

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12. (U) On October 28, Foley and Scialabba met with a delegation of UN officials led by Radhouane Noucier, UNHCR's Director for North Africa and the Middle East, Imran Riza, UNHCR Jordan representative, and Janvier de Riedmatten, UNHCR Iraq representative. Noucier prefaced the meeting by noting that Iraqi refugees are the largest urban caseload in UNHCR history. Noucier estimated the number of Iraqi refugees as follows:

- Syria: 1.2 million
- Jordan: 400,000 - 500,000
- The Gulf: 200,000
- Lebanon: 20,000
- Egypt: 20,000

Noucier estimated that vulnerable cases (based on criteria such as health, female-headed households, orphans, etc.) represent 25 percent of the population which, he cautioned, has limited means of sustaining itself. Thus, despite UNHCR's providing food, health, education and cash assistance (primarily to offset the cost of rent), resources of the Iraqi population continue to dwindle.

13. (SBU) De Reidmatten estimated that until July there were 50,000-60,000 new displacements per month in Iraq, though that figure appears to have decreased and, according to the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration, up to 3,000 families have returned to their homes in Baghdad. UNHCR Iraq assistance continues to focus primarily on communities hosting concentrations of IDPs that are often difficult to identify and reach. He noted that 30 percent of the IDPs are in settlements of some sort and can thus be more easily served, but that the other 70 percent, an urban caseload distributed throughout towns and cities, are much harder to reach. He said there is now a noticeable concentration of

IDPs in Babil Governorate. He said he thought MODM performance is improving, noting that UNHCR has suggested to MODM that it second one or two officers to the Ministry to help with information management, planning and capacity building.

¶4. (SBU) Noucier estimated that UNHCR will request at least USD 126 million for its 2008 appeal. He was pleased that the 2007 general appeal was almost entirely funded, but noted the outstanding health and educational appeals were less supported. UNHCR requested that Foley consider lifting the usual USG cap of 25-30 percent of funding UNHCR appeals, remarking that the UN refugee agency would face trouble in 2008 if donors other than the U.S., Japan and Denmark did not step forward. Noucier encouraged Foley to pressure other potential European and Gulf donors to contribute.

¶5. (SBU) Noucier claimed that UNHCR will have 20,000 submissions region-wide for resettlement by the end of 2007, and asked Ambassador Foley to clarify U.S. resettlement goals through 2008. Foley replied that the USG has set a goal of 12,000 for 2008, but that our capacity to process relies on external factors such as our ability to operate and conduct interviews in Syria. Foley strongly urged UNHCR to boost referrals to USRAP in Jordan.

¶6. (SBU) As the meeting closed, Ambassador Foley raised recently-publicized reports of alleged discrimination by UNHCR staff against Iraqi Christians. UNHCR rebuffed the claims' validity, and reiterated its commitment to following up all claims of mistreatment. Noucier said that 22 percent of those registered to date with UNHCR in Jordan - and 36 percent of those resettled - have been Christian. UNHCR expressed a concern that creating a special track for

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Christians would lead to additional criticisms by other religious minorities, heightened tensions in the neighboring countries, and could have the unintended consequence of "emptying" Iraq of its historic religious minorities.

NGOs IDENTIFY ONGOING CHALLENGES

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¶7. (SBU) On October 29, Foley attended an informal lunch hosted by Save the Children with representatives of NGOs supporting displaced Iraqis. Save the Children stressed that Jordan is a developing country with its own demographic and development challenges, and its absorption of Iraqis must be understood in that context. NGOs offered their respective theories on why Iraqi enrollment in Jordanian schools (generally estimated to be 20,000-25,000) was less than hoped (ref B), most of them having to do with fear and economic considerations.

¶8. (SBU) ICMC, Mercy Corps and CARE representatives described ongoing tensions between Iraqis and Jordanians mostly of Palestinian origin. According to these NGOs, young Iraqis are angry about their situation and inability to work to support themselves, while Jordanians of Palestinian origin are resentful of the attention and resources devoted to the Iraqis. They noted the common scapegoating of Iraqis for the increasing costs of food, fuel and other basic necessities, while many Jordanians have not seen an increase in their standard of living. All NGOs stressed that, in developing programs to help displaced Iraqis, they plan for 25-50 percent of those they serve to be lower-income Jordanians. They speculated that as the resources and savings of Iraqis decline, the burden on Jordan will grow, the situation for Iraqis will worsen, and the GOJ will be forced to consider (unspecified) "alternate solutions".

¶9. (U) Several NGO representatives spoke about the procedures and challenges they have faced in registering their activities and coordinating with the Government of Jordan. Care's representative explained that the Ministry of Planning

has established an ad-hoc committee composed of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education and the General Intelligence Directorate to consider all requests by NGOs that are not operating under the auspices of UN agencies. ANERA, a PRM-funded implementer for an informal education and psychosocial support program, described its continued and unsuccessful effort to solicit approval from this committee, and in particular the Ministry of Education representative, because of GOJ fears that its programming will create a parallel education system. At the same time, Qwestscope, a non-formal educational provider, expressed optimism that its educational courses would soon be expanded to include Iraqis with GOJ blessing. In unanimity, NGOs stated their opinion that the GOJ would never approve vocational training for Iraqis for fear that it would lead additional Iraqis to work illegally.

¶10. (SBU) Overall, Ambassador Foley and his delegation were struck by the prospect - emphasized by several of the NGOs - of the inevitable impoverishment of those Iraqis in Jordan (probably the majority) whose resources are being depleted and who have few means to replenish them, and the increased tensions this will cause within Jordan.

¶11. (U) Ambassador Foley has cleared this cable.  
Hale